



No Gift Receipt? Bah Humbug!

Release Date:

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MADISON – Sometimes gifts get returned. Wrong size, wrong color, wrong item altogether...there are any number of reasons why a gift might go back to the store. To make the return and exchange process easier for the gift recipient, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection asks shoppers to pay close attention to the different stores' policies while they shop and to keep all sales documentation organized and accessible throughout the holiday season.

"Even a great gift can lose its luster if it needs to be returned or exchanged by the recipient but can't for some preventable reason," said Frank Frassetto, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection. "Before making a purchase, the gift giver should understand the store policies on return limitations and deadlines, possible restock fees or any other issue that might tank a potential return or cost the recipient money."

Remember to keep your receipts handy and to pick up a gift receipt at the time of purchase. Before you wrap the item, pack the gift receipt in the box or tape it to the front or side of the box to ensure that the recipient doesn't overlook it. Some stores will not honor a return or refund request without a receipt.

Other simple return tips include:

- Stores are required by law to honor the return guidelines they represent to consumers. If the store's policy is not posted, ask a salesperson or manager about the terms before making a purchase.
- Know that different stores have different policies. Store policies may differ by item as well.
- Pay attention to the time frame allotted by the retailer for returns. Find out if the countdown to the last day for returns begins on the date of original purchase of the item or if there are extended holiday return timeframes.
- As you're wrapping gifts, leave the price tags and UPC codes intact and keep the original packaging. Some stores charge a restocking fee for opened items or those without their packaging – especially electronics.
- Understand any conditions that apply when you buy items on sale or clearance. Some stores may not allow you to return these items.
- If you are shopping by phone or online, find out who pays return shipping fees if you have a problem with the product. Does the retailer pay those fees or does the consumer? Are return shipping fees deducted from the refund amount?

If you believe a retailer is not honoring its posted return policy, file a complaint with the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wisconsin.gov, send an e-mail to datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov or call the Consumer Protection Hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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